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The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 5 November 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the reply of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the letter dated 17 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General on agenda item 166 (A/56/483-S/2001/975) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 42, 88 and 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 5 November 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 29 October 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, I should like to transmit to you a reply to the letter of the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations dated 17 October 2001 (A/56/483-S/2001/975).

Israel's officials and its representatives to the United Nations let slip no occasion on which the failure of their policies and the futility of their practices is confirmed without levelling groundless accusations at the Syrian Arab Republic with a view to discrediting its fundamental positions, in particular its commitment to the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The untruthful remark made in the said letter, to the effect that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is headquartered in Damascus, falls within the context of the unremitting Israeli policy to mislead international public opinion and distract it from the brutal acts which Israel carries out against the Palestinian people and it is part of a desperate bid to tarnish the image of the Syrian Arab Republic, whose position enjoys the support of international legitimacy and the respect of the international community and its States represented in the United Nations.

Israeli practices have grown ever more reckless during recent months. In this respect, the killing of Palestinian citizens has become a daily Israeli pastime, with Palestinians being massacred under any pretext. Israel, its military forces and its settlers have no hesitation in storming Palestinian towns and villages and demolishing homes on top of children, elderly people and women as they sleep. It is clear that Israel is not yet satisfied with its killing of over 730 Palestinians during one year alone or with the injury of thousands, a large number of whom are now disabled and incapable of movement or work. Israel's thirst for spilling Arab blood reflects the deep-seated hostility of its leaders to Arabs, to peace and to all the efforts made by numerous international parties for the achievement of true peace.

What provokes sadness, sorrow and even anger is Israel's use of what it calls terrorism as justification for the massacres that it perpetrates. In all cases, Israel and its leaders forget or pretend to forget that it is they who brought terrorism to the Middle East and who have practised such terrorism from the beginning of the 1940s to this day. Books on the modern history of the Middle East are full of documented information for anyone wishing to learn about the Israeli terrorist gangs who killed thousands of Arabs in cold blood and drove millions of them from their land. The Palestinian refugees stand as irrefutable evidence, living as they do in a great many Arab and other countries of the world, bearing the pain of the displaced in search of refuge and looking forward to just treatment and the restoration of their legitimate rights in accordance with international legitimacy and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The fatal mistake which Israel and its leaders persistently make is to believe that the strength of Israel's aircraft, tanks and missiles can defend its occupation and justify its terrorism and lies. Israel has learnt nothing from the lessons of history, which have proved that to occupy the land of others and to drive out, kill and repress the people of that land are all grounds which justify the struggle of those peoples to achieve their independence, sovereignty and freedom. International humanitarian law, in particular the fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol II, upholds the right of peoples to fight against colonial domination and foreign occupation.

Since the end of the 1940s, the Syrian Arab Republic has taken in its Palestinian brothers forced by Israel to leave their homes and has opened its doors to them, bandaged their wounds and supported their right of return to their homeland. These refugees are adamant that Palestine is their homeland and that their right of return and self-determination cannot be relinquished. On that basis, the Syrian Arab Republic, which has supported the right of peoples to liberation and self-determination, as have most of the other countries of the world, also supports its Palestinian brothers, each faction of whom has information offices in Syrian territory and nothing more. The statement contained in the letter of the Israeli representative that PFLP is headquartered in Damascus is pure fabrication, since it is well known that the PFLP leadership and cadres have been in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1995.

The statement in the Israeli letter that "certain regimes in the Middle East continue to support, and even participate in, violent terrorist operations" is ludicrous. For that matter, everyone knows that Israel adopts terrorism as an official policy and that it practises such terrorism each day and hour through its occupation of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian Arab territories and through its perpetration of terrorist massacres within the sight and hearing of the world, without shame or hesitation. The Arab States have affirmed their condemnation of international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, particularly in their adoption of the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism and at the most recent meeting of Arab ministers for foreign affairs held in Doha, Qatar, on 9 October 2001, as well as at the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Doha on 10 October 2001. The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the countries of the world to exert pressure on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories and cease its organized terrorism with a view to the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of international legitimacy, international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly under agenda items 42, 88 and 166, and as a document of the Security Council.

Fayssal **Mekdad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.